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ABSTRACT

Finding that community colleges and their female students are rarely and disparagingly depicted in fiction motivated this study of the image of community colleges in literature, movies, and television. The study also sought to compare this image with that emerging from the journal entries of 23 women community college students and 14 faculty members from 5 colleges in Illinois, Oregon, and New York. Following an introduction describing the author's efforts to balance a working-class background with an academic work environment, chapter 1 presents an overview of the dissonant images of community colleges in fiction and in the personal narratives of community college students and faculty. The design of the study is explained, along with the significance of the findings for adult education. Chapter 2 offers illustrations of how the terms "community college" and "junior college" have become shorthand in fiction for a long inventory of pejorative, demeaning adjectives. Chapter 3 reviews the characteristics of two-year college students in fiction, tracing changes over time. In chapter 4, 23 student journals commissioned for the study are analyzed to develop a profile of the students and to identify common themes (i.e., agency, marginality, joy of learning, and juggling responsibilities). After chapter 5 reviews the portrayal of two-year college faculty in fiction broken down into categories based on the characters' quality as teachers, chapter 6 analyzes the faculty journals focusing on themes of nurturing and generative action, marginality, poorly prepared students, and other problems. Chapter 7 focuses on the meaning of the journal writing process for students and faculty. Chapter 8 draws conclusions about study findings. Includes 132 references. (ECC)

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